



# VALUABLE CARE

THE FUTURE OF  
HEALTHCARE 2010-2050







A VOICE  
I N H E A L T H C A R E

“Healthcare needs to start  
doing what it means...”

“ Healthcare needs to start doing what it means. That means it should primarily be a preventative system, caring for health rather than illness. That's the only way we can move forward in terms of human and social development. It's the only way that we can come closer to a society in which everyone lives a dignified life, fulfilling their potential and making a contribution to society. ”

Herman Wijffels\*, reacting to LOC A Voice in Healthcare's vision of the future of healthcare in the Netherlands.

\* Herman Wijffels is professor of Sustainability and Social Change at Utrecht University. He was a representative of the Netherlands to the World Bank; chairman of the Netherlands Social and Economic Council and executive director of the Rabobank.





**THE  
FUTURE  
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IS:  
VALUABLE CARE**

## NECESSARY AND INSPIRING

LOC is excited to be presenting its vision of the future of healthcare. For the sake of convenience, we refer to it as 'care'. This vision focuses on healthcare in the Netherlands from 2010 to 2050. It's an inspiring perspective of the future. And it's a necessary perspective. The care sector faces substantial and mounting problems. That's why LOC is already throwing itself into this vision of the future. Because that future starts today.

It's also a vision of a different kind of society; one in which care is fully appreciated. After all, it's easy for all of us to see how valuable care is. For those who need care, it's usually crucial that they have access to it. That applies just as much to the people around them. But valuable care has value for other reasons too. In the following pages we'll explain why.

But first, let's take a moment to take a look back at the past. Ever since the end of WW2, the Netherlands as a whole has worked hard on the well-being of society. That has included many developments in the care sector. A whole array of support and treatment systems have emerged. Those services are there for people who are vulnerable because of old age, or due to physical or mental afflictions. Gradually, the demand for care has also increased. The system is now constructed in such a way that we try to care for as many people as possible for as little money as possible. In many care settings, for

instance, people are still woken up and washed simultaneously. They also have to eat and use the toilet at fixed times. With home-based care, you are expected to structure your day around the care provider's schedule. We may all be different, but care services are uniform, with a one-size-fits-all approach. The idea is that this makes it cheaper. And with budgets being tightened, the cost of care is coming under increasing scrutiny. But such parsimony isn't helpful. Shortages are increasingly being felt, and care often receives a bad press. We're all indignant if people do not receive the kind of care that we think should be available to them.

Of course there are some good initiatives and examples of good practice. But so far these haven't led to real changes in care. This is partly because of current regulations, which prevent large-scale changes from being implemented.

Things get even more complicated when you consider how elderly people are increasingly making up a larger proportion of society. That means more people will need care over the coming decades. At the same time, fewer people are working in care. That's partly why the issue of costs is becoming increasingly important to how we organise care. Those costs determine how care is structured.





LOC questions whether that should really be the starting point. This vision sets out an answer to that question. Now back to the present.



## PEOPLE ARE WHOLE

*Valuable care  
emphasises  
health*

LOC thinks we should take a different approach to care, and to cost management. That's what this vision is about. The primary focus of care should be people's health. That might sound odd, because if you need care, then by definition you must not be healthy. But is that really the case?

You could turn that on its head. People who need care can be very important to those around them, just in a different way than they were before. There's more to them than just their ill health.

Most people would rather not be defined in those terms. They wish to be seen as whole human beings. After all, everyone is valuable, to themselves and to others. In the future, care services will focus on that value. Doing so will bring out the best in people. It will also place a particular focus on their health. And that's the starting point for our provision of care.

LOC's vision is founded on the idea of valuable care. It's all about the value of people - and their own values. That gives care a whole other purpose, and a whole other value to society.

## WHAT IS HEALTH?

So, valuable care is founded on good health. But what is 'health' exactly? We use a definition of health known to many: that of the World Health Organization. In 1948 it stated:

**"Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."**

This definition is about optimal well-being. It's about people being as happy as possible: physically, mentally and socially. What that means in practice varies from one person to the next, as we'll see from a few simple examples.

- Being able to move freely makes people happy. That's true of people with physical limitations too.
- Being able to share thoughts, feelings and experiences with others makes people happy. That's true even if those thoughts and feelings may be unhappy ones.
- Having things to do that matter to them makes people happy. It means they can make a contribution. Even if they're not fully healthy.

People often feel happy, or happier, if they can do things that they feel are important. As human beings, we gain pleasure from doing those things, and pleasure contributes to our sense of happiness.

Everyone has a set of values. Those values determine what people consider to be important, or not, and that varies from one person to the next. If attention is paid to what we consider important, we feel happy. The examples we gave earlier illustrate some of those values:

- Someone who likes to move around freely, values freedom.
- Someone who likes to share things, values humanity.
- Someone who likes to contribute, values responsibility.

*Valuable care  
is of value  
to people  
and society*





## PEOPLE AND THEIR VALUES

That's why LOC thinks care should focus on people's values. It should focus on what's important to them. That's valuable care, based on values.

And that's why care should focus on people's health, not just their illness. Such an approach helps people to do the things that matter to them, even if they may have to do those things a bit differently. It gives a sense of purpose to people's lives, and helps them feel their own life is meaningful. And then they can contribute, in all sorts of ways.

It all sounds rather obvious, really. And it's tricky too, because we need to start thinking about people and their care in a different way. At the moment, care services focus on people's illness. In future, the focus will be on health.

A care provider won't just be caring for a sick person. They'll be working with that person to find out how they can feel as well as possible, and therefore as valuable as possible. What might that person need in order to achieve that?

Paying that kind of attention to a person shows that everyone is valuable, always. In that way, the type of care someone receives can make them feel valuable. Good health follows, and that ultimately makes care valuable to society.





## A HEALTHY SOCIETY

The most important task for care services in the future will be to help people feel as healthy as possible. That's how care services contribute to a healthy society.

When individuals can take pleasure in their lives, the people around them benefit too. It's important for people to feel that their loved ones are happy, especially if they need care.

It's also important for those who provide the care. Those who work in care services really can contribute to a sense of purpose in people's lives. That's fulfilling to them too, and in turn it benefits the people receiving the care.

With this vision, LOC is boldly rejecting two common views of health and care services:

- We don't start from the premise that humans can be 'perfected'. Everyone can experience illness and vulnerability. Those who are ill and vulnerable must, if necessary, receive full care. Not the minimum level they currently receive.



- People are never solely victims, or totally vulnerable. Everyone can, with the right kind of attention and help, experience well-being. In this way, they can discover a sense of their own worth. That becomes impossible if we insist on seeing people as 'victims'.

In other words, we respect the vulnerability of people, and we don't see them as victims. That also means that people are responsible for their lives. The level of responsibility that an individual can bear will vary from one person to the next.

Some people's afflictions prevent them from being able to take responsibility for all aspects of their lives. But they can still be supported to enable them to take responsibility wherever they can. Particularly in ways that they couldn't before:

- Someone with dementia might enjoy helping to serve coffee in the care home. She feels better doing that than playing games at the day care centre. In her own way, she's taking responsibility for the care of others. She's happy to do her bit.



*Valuable care  
gives people  
responsibility*

- Someone with a psychosis might like to help out in the vegetable garden of a nearby company, whenever possible. He's doing something he feels is important. That's valuable. He's also responsible for his work. That gives him a sense of worth, and he's making a contribution.
- Someone with addiction problems might want to share his experiences with others. He tells school children about his life. He notices how attentive they are. Through his life experiences, he can educate them. He's contributing to their future and to that of society. He is valuable.

Taking responsibility can therefore be done in very different ways. Valuable care is about finding out what fits for each person, and what's possible for them. What do they value? What form could that take? How can they use that to make a contribution?

We can draw on every possible activity and care and treatment method for this. People know perfectly well what will benefit them in practice. They just need the right support.


## PREVENTATIVE CARE TAKES PRECEDENCE

No one likes to think about illness and care too much. The question is, how often do we think about our happiness? When people get sick, they often say we don't realise how valuable our health is. That's what preventative care is about. It's caring for our health. It's also about everyone's responsibility to want to be healthy. That doesn't mean a society in which you don't have a right to care if you're not healthy. What it does mean, is that people can be helped to consider the choices they make, and whether or not they'll be happy as a result. Perhaps we make choices that don't make us happy, because we don't know what does make us happy? In a healthy society, people learn what makes them happy. It's something that begins in childhood. And we can also learn how to make other choices, and how we can bring meaning to our own lives.



*Valuable care  
means giving  
meaning to  
your life*



A photograph of a construction site, showing a pile of wooden planks and debris on the left side of the page. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting an indoor construction environment.

A healthy society is based on its people's values. It's the same with care. People can give their lives structure in many different ways, and they can contribute in many ways.

That healthy society therefore isn't about things that 'aren't allowed'. It's about knowing what we might be able to do differently. What is it that really fits with what I, as a person, think is important? People's health benefits from their being happy. Research has indicated this time and again. Healthy people create a healthy society.

We'd all like to be healthy, and to stay healthy. If care focuses on our health, we're likely to feel good about contributing in different ways, including financially. But if healthcare is based on the presumption of illness, it stimulates resistance. We're not as keen to contribute to that. And then we think of the sector as a burden. Preventative care only works in a society where other values are considered important. If we base our values on 'money and goods', then we only regard economic value as being important. That's what's happening now. But a society where health takes precedence is structured differently. And that's certainly not a task for care services alone.

## THE VALUABLE SOCIETY

Just to be clear once again: LOC thinks we need to take a wider perspective.

At a societal level, what that means is that we currently have a society where 'money and goods' take precedence. It's all about economic values. In due course, we'll have a society where people and their values take precedence. It's about social values. People contribute to our well-being, but they do so based on what they feel is important. That's a valuable kind of society. But in terms of money, it could be less expensive.

At the level of care services, that means a similar change.





At the moment we think in terms of the question:  
isn't that too expensive?

How can we deliver care for the lowest possible  
price?

In due course, we'll think in terms of providing  
optimum health to everyone. Then everyone will be  
able to contribute, as much as their capacity allows.  
People's own values lie at the heart of this. That's  
valuable care. But in terms of money, it could be less  
expensive. Because if care doesn't really support  
people, it's missing the point. And that costs a lot of  
money.







**Valuable care  
means  
'we are society'**



## MAKING IT BETTER, TOGETHER

The care sector can't bring about this major change on its own. But it can play an important part. Care is part of society, after all. As a society, we're ready for a different perspective of humanity. People's values determine what a society looks like. That, in turn, determines how a society functions. By supporting people to be and to act according to what they think is important, we can ensure they contribute to the best of their ability.

The care sector can't do that on its own, and it's not the only place where change is needed. Change has to happen in every area. We need a paradigm shift in economics, culture, technology, education, nature and the environment.

The government, industry, education and social organisations eventually need to be structured in a new way. And a far greater level of

cooperation is needed. After all, everything is a component of that one society. Everything has its influence, and we all influence each other. Society is a single entity.

People can play their part in all kinds of ways, including people who need care. The tide is already turning, in the care sector and elsewhere. The care sector even has the potential to act as a trailblazer, because it is proving to be very capable. Around 20 experiments have shown this. They took place as part of the Long-term Care Transition Programme.

The care sector is particularly suited to act as a trailblazer, because its work is people-based, and working with people goes right to the heart of our vision.

We hope that we've inspired you. With this vision, LOC is initiating a dialogue, and it's just a first step. We also have thoughts about how we can bring this vision to life. We'd like to engage with anyone who wants to work towards and contribute to this new society. Our doors are open to any passionate members of service user groups, service users in general, or any other organisations or companies who feel involved.



This vision is a simplified summary of a theoretical framework. In it, LOC states the perspectives presented here in a framework supported by scientific theories. The theoretical framework 'Care in the Netherlands 2010 - 2050' can be requested from LOC via: [vraagbaak@loc.nl](mailto:vraagbaak@loc.nl).

This publication features images of people – both large and small – receiving or giving care. Whether they are vulnerable or not, people can be of value in their own way, to themselves and to society. With attention and care, they can be human. And by giving attention and care themselves, they can be human.

LOC A Voice in Care represents 2,200 service user groups and 600,000 service users in the mental healthcare, social support, nursing & caring, addiction support, homecare and well-being sectors.

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